Drafting God: Pittsburgh Methodist Churches and World War I

By Ted Sturm

In mid-1915, Secretary of State Robert Lansing reminded Americans: “Germany must not be permitted to win this war. . . . American public opinion must be prepared for the time . . . when we will have to cast aside our neutrality and become one of the champions of democracy.” ¹ Vigorous patronage by American churches added greatly to the decisive public attitude that Mr. Lansing believed was necessary for the Wilson Administration’s war policy. Through the vicissitudes of war, the churches and the state complemented one another, producing a national consensus for World War I. Religion was the validating element that supported all the basic values and goals which the society counted as righteous. Under such conditions, the government had an indispensable partner who provided the moral justification for the war, while in the same instance, synthesizing society.

During the two decades that preceded the outbreak of the European war, the principal Protestant denominations had experienced a mental shock caused by the immigration from eastern and southern Europe. The established Protestant value system saw that system under assault from the foreigners. Culturally, these immigrants were far-removed from the Anglo-Saxon heritage perceived by the Protestant denominations to be the sustaining force of American society.

Indeed, industrialization and urbanization had posed a dilemma for the American Protestant churches and their leaders during the last years of the nineteenth century. The main-line Protestant denominations differed over how to save the “unchurched” masses, i.e., the Social Gospelers advocated a social interpretation of the Scriptures as the path to salvation, while the majority followed a more conservative route suggesting that ministering to the spiritual needs of the individual was the proper route. Both factions, however, agreed that the immigrant had to be “Americanized.” This Christianizing endeavor

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assumed a sense of urgency because, in the eyes of the church, the immigrant "... would never be assimilated into the larger society, and thus would never learn to value Blue Laws, Sabbath laws, and, in general, the moral standards of the native American middle class." 2

Because of its great industrial capacity, the Pittsburgh district offered numerous opportunities to those churches that wished to practice a social Christianity. Although every social problem from housing to labor unrest could be found in the district, only a few churches seized the opportunity to implement, or even propose, real social reform. Richard M. Cameron, in his study of Methodism and Society in Historical Perspective, says that while middle-class values and economic conservatism prevented the Methodist churches from upholding social reform, it was temperance that brought the Methodists into the labor districts. When the United States entered the World War in 1917, the American Protestant churches found themselves in a position to link their domestic campaigns against immigrant influence with war-time patriotism.

The Pittsburgh Evangelization Convention, an interdenominational organization, concluded that industrialization had attracted and created new classes that "... are in every sense alien peoples, and a menace to our institutions." 3 Although the Convention's solution was rather simplistic, its general explanation was that "... we must Americanize and Christianize them." 4 The Evangelization Convention was concerned with inculcating the immigrant with the proper behavior and respect for traditional American institutions. Even before the First World War, the Americanizing process had a distinct patriotic flavor, since it was the means whereby the cultural heritage of America was to be preserved. The imposition of middle-class, Protestant attitudes took various appearances, including the Social Gospel movement, temperance, and later, of course, prohibition.

Antagonistic attitudes toward the immigrant and his "Old World" customs advanced a strong negative stereotype that surfaced during the war as an anti-German prejudice. Much of the anti-foreign feeling was linked to labor unions. In the labor disturbances of the 1890s, the majority of Protestant Church leaders considered labor unions to have been inspired and supported by alien radicals, anarchists, and socialists. The Methodist Review carried numerous articles which

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3 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Nov. 29, 1900, 1.
4 Ibid.
stereotyped the labor union as an instrument of foreign-born radicals. *The Review* focused attention on the anarchists, who "... have organized their discontent on a contented land. ... They take advantage of the free country they curse and assert their protests with bombs."  

In the place of labor organizations, the Protestant churches proposed that economic improvement would be achieved through "... economy, frugality, industry, and virtue," which *The Review* said were guarantees against want. "God has so ordered it."  

Likewise, the Pittsburgh churches looked upon transplanted European ideologies, especially socialism, as an abomination of American life. "The soil," said the Methodist hierarchy in Pittsburgh, "is uncongenial for class division, a foreign ideology."  

Marxist socialism was viewed as "... an imminent danger to the United States."  

In the place of foreign ideologies the churches suggested that workers live by the "Golden Rule." The Reverend J. J. Jackson, a Pittsburgh clergyman, caught the general spirit of the Protestant church when he announced that the "... whole matter of foreign agitators is explained when we see that to almost the last man, all these dynamiters are alien atheists believing in no God in the heaven above...." 

Reverend Jackson blamed the public school system because it excluded *Bible* study from the curriculum.

The widely-held perception of an immigrant class of laborers challenging American beliefs provided an extremely fertile environment for the intense anti-German war-time campaign that was conducted by the Protestant churches of America from 1915 to 1917. David Kennedy, in *Over Here, The First World War and American Society*, notes that it was remarkable that "cries for undiluted loyalty and full-blown Americanism came from ... the cultivated classes, the elites supposedly inoculated by education against base emotional appeals." After three decades of preaching a negative prejudice toward the immigrant, it was not in the least remarkable or surprising that the clergy would lead the anti-German assault. An examination of the Pittsburgh Protestant churches, especially the Methodist Church, because of their familiarity with immigrant labor, indicates that the transfer of prejudice did occur.

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6 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, June 12, 1879, 4.
7 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Apr. 2, 1885, 2.
8 Ibid.
9 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Apr. 16, 1885, 3.
Both President Wilson and his critic, Theodore Roosevelt, admonished Americans to join the war effort. Speaking on behalf of military preparedness in 1915, Roosevelt reminded Americans of the need to serve God and country when he wrote, "Unless we are thorough-going Americans and unless our patriotism is part of the very fiber of our being, we can neither serve God nor take our own part." \(^{11}\) In the same essay, he wrote: "The United States can accomplish little for mankind, save in so far as within its borders unless it develops an intense spirit of Americanism." \(^{12}\) His remarks presupposed that the entire world was an American sphere open for the implementation of American progress. President Wilson, commemorating 70 years of the YMCA, advised: "Be militant . . . what I am hoping for is that these 70 years have just been a running start, and that now there will be a great rush of Christian principle upon the strongholds of evil and of wrong in the world." \(^{13}\) The following year, 1915, he addressed the Federal Council of Churches and called America the hope of the world. "That," he told the audience, "is the light that shines from America. God grant that it may always shine. . . . That is what makes the world feel America draw it like a lodestone." \(^{14}\)

Actually, Pittsburgh Methodist churches needed no prodding from the government. Voluntariness prevailed, conformity was imposed, and ministers who dissented were relieved of their duties. Indeed, the Wilson Administration had a staunch ally among the Protestant denominations of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Methodist churches were as determined as any in the nation to sanctify the war. "Announce this far and wide: Get ready for war! Conscript your best soldiers; collect

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\(^{12}\) Ibid.


Painting in popular magazine, c. 1920. (Original in color) Hench Scrapbook Collection, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.
all your armies. Melt your plowshares into swords and beat your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak be strong. Gather together and come, all nations everywhere. . . . And now, O Lord, bring down your warriors. . . .”  

Thus, Reverend James Hillers of the Franklin Street Baptist Church, selected for his Liberty Loan Sunday message, October 21, 1917, a passage from Joel, Chapter 3, verses 9-11. Reverend Hillers concluded his war sermon with the admonition that all “able-bodied young men had a duty to God, to their country and to their Christian families to defend the lands against the sin-ridden forces of the barbaric Hun.”  

With such exaggerated petition, the churches of Pittsburgh contributed to the creation of a national deity. Of course, the calling upon God by the leaders of the state, any state, is as old as humankind. And, in war God is the first to be inducted. Israelites, for instance, viewed Yahweh virtually as their commander-in-chief. In fact, the “God of hosts” may very well mean “Lord of the army” in both a heavenly and earthly sense. The Old Testament abounds with Godly support for his people in time of defensive and offensive war. In America, the spiritual bonds that united this nation to God’s biblical promises need no documentation.

Nevertheless, the novelty and the totality of mobilizing for World War I initially presented Americans with a disturbing psychological dilemma. How could a professed Christian society, which claimed to adhere to the teachings of its spiritual leaders, namely Jesus Christ, support the state in prosecuting a war against another acknowledged Christian state? This was a distressful situation for those who believed themselves to be true followers of Christ. Ultimately, the war was resolved to be a holy war against evil incarnate — the Hun! Consequently, the faithful found comfort in the notion that this conflict was a holy war and victory would extend God’s earthly kingdom. Thus, like their national counterparts, the Methodist Churches of Pittsburgh launched their own “holy war” against Germany. Americanizing the foreign born, through temperance, and extending democracy to Europe were easily woven into one great moral endeavor.

Reverend Henry D. Morehouse, a member of the Methodist Temperance Committee, raised the specter of immigrants overrunning middle-

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15 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Oct. 25, 1917, 3. (Note: The quoted passage was revised from the original King James version to the Modern Standard version.)

16 Ibid

17 For more information on this subject see: *Book of Joshar*, 2Sa. i 18; *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, Nu.xxi 14f; Ex. xv 3; is: xlii 13.
class America. He cited statistics on the influx of Germans, Italians and eastern Europeans into the United States. Once he had established these facts, he revealed his fears, writing:

... [W]e are appalled by the situation; stand aghast at the possible perils to our civilization; while the indigestibility of much of the recent accessions from eastern and southern Europe threatens the body politic with acute gastritis. ... Evangelical protestantism is confronted, on a large scale, with religious formalism, sacramentarianism, sacerdotalism, miracle-working bones, bigotry, ecclesiastical tyranny, infidelity, atheism and anarchy, with a close approximation to the Continental Sunday.\textsuperscript{18}

Temperance was seen as a means to instill in the immigrant classes middle-class respectability, and thereby, assured their Americanization. All of this could be accomplished by simply imposing upon the new arrivals the "respectable" standards of the Methodist Episcopal church. The term "respectable" was used synonymously with "churched people." The \textit{Pittsburgh Christian Advocate}, the official newspaper of the Pittsburgh Methodist Episcopal Church, acknowledged this in 1906 when the paper endorsed George W. Guthrie for mayor of Pittsburgh. Mr. Guthrie was quite acceptable to the Methodists, who expected him to launch a campaign to rid the city of vice and corruption. But when he lost the election, the \textit{Advocate} editorialized, "The church people and many others of the best citizens nominated a gentleman of undoubted character . . . but they were defeated at the polls. The saloons and the vicious foreign classes to a man and woman lined up for the Republican candidate. . . ."\textsuperscript{19}

In as much as these "vicious classes" had won at the polls, the church would have to work diligently to convert them and make them politically safe. Voluntary abstinence, for those who could be reached, was one technique, but prohibition, sanctioned by federal law, seemed to be a surer way to impose morality upon the immoral.

In the Methodist Protestant Church, the Committee on Temperance reported that people were becoming aroused over "Prohibition." The Committee endorsed "Prohibition . . . the only successful method of dealing with the saloon. . . . The temperance question followed to its logical conclusion results in the Prohibition Party."\textsuperscript{20} Following a similar line, the Committee reported that the ultimate end would have to be "National Prohibition." The Methodist Protestant Conference asked its people to hold public meetings, send petitions to the United States Congress, and write letters in protest until national prohibition

\textsuperscript{18} \textit{Pittsburgh Christian Advocate}, Mar. 8, 1906, 3.
\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Pittsburgh Christian Advocate}, Mar. 1, 1906, 1.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Conference Minutes of the Methodist Episcopal Church}, Pittsburgh, 1903, 34-35.

On foreign matters, the wholesale arming of Europe, punctuated by crisis, prompted the Methodist Church to give attention to the threat of war. In 1912, the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, through the "Episcopal Address," had come out solidly for "Peace by Arbitration":

It is for mammon, and not for righteousness, that thrones and parliaments are crowding the oceans with leviathans of battle, even while the people are praying for an end of war and pleading for international arbitration. The high courage of our President in declaring that all disagreements, involving questions of whatever sort should be submitted to an International Court, is worthy the acclamations of all peoples who have escaped the brutal spirit of barbaric ages. Let every Methodist pulpit ring out clearly and insistently for Peace by Arbitration.21

Four years later, 1916, the General Conference once more declared itself in favor of peace:

Whatever may be done, our people at home and abroad should feel that the Methodist Episcopal Church, in all lands and under all flags, stands for world righteousness and world peace, the ultimate disarmament of all nations, and the social redemption of all peoples by the practical application of the teachings of Jesus Christ.22

Although the General Conference's peace declaration conformed to the government's policy at that moment, its words, such as "social redemption," recalled the Methodist Churches' program for the domestic salvation of the foreign-born. In 1916, the Methodist hierarchy could only reflect upon "world righteousness"; in 1917, after the declaration of war, forcing righteousness on the world by supporting the government's policy was a very real prospect. Immediately after the United States declared war on Germany, the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church clarified its convictions and principles. The statement opened with a declaration of loyalty: "We are Methodist; by tradition and inheritance, we are loyal to the State. . . ."23 The Methodists confessed that the "flag is the symbol of a prompt and adequate protection upon which they [U.S. citizens] may always rely. . . . We pledge our support and service to follow the flag wherever it may lead. . . ."24

23 Minutes of the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh, 1917, 217-19.
24 Ibid.
For the Pittsburgh Conference to place the goal of the nation above its Christian convictions was to fall into step with the major Protestant denominations on the national level. Gilbert C. Fite and H. C. Peterson, in *Opponents of War, 1917-1918*, found that Protestant churches across the nation backed the war effort. They conclude that the Protestant churches' "main war influence was to help people to bridge the mental and spiritual gap between peace and war." The bridge was constructed from negative stereotypes of immigrants collected during preceding decades.

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*Postcard, c. 1918. (Original in color) Hench Scrapbook Collection, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.*

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25 Gilbert C. Fite and H. C. Peterson, Opponents of War, 1917-1918 (Seattle, 1957), 114.
support of the war effort. In January 1918, the church created the War Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church. This organization was largely the work of Bishop Joseph F. Berry, although the Board of Bishops of the General Conference was officially responsible for its existence and activities. One of the Council’s first acts was to set aside Sunday, May 26, 1918, for a special nation-wide service on behalf of the Methodist War Fund. At the time, the War Council proclaimed its purposes to be:

(1) To mobilize the entire denomination through its departmental and other activities, to act as a unit in a comprehensive war program.

(2) To place the church thus mobilized at the service of the United States authorities for active cooperation with the several departments of government.\(^{26}\)

The committee established a 15-point program designated to acquaint Methodists with their patriotic obligations. The list included such activities as the use of massive meetings to develop loyalty and to discuss the moral and religious significance of war; to secure chaplains for military camps; command sacrifices from local churches, such as raising money for the War Fund; develop patriotism among the youth through Sunday schools; arrange for patriotic speakers for Sunday services; and secure aid for military hospitals.\(^{27}\)

The General Conference’s requests and recommendations concerning the war brought a more complete response from the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church than did its earlier social pronouncements. Bishop Franklin Hamilton admonished the representatives to the Pittsburgh Annual Conference of 1918, that:

At this hour, the supreme duty is to win this war. We call upon our people to give themselves with devotion to this task. We beseech them to pray the Heavenly Father that the hearts of us all may be opened to know how best we may bring to triumph the cause of our country and her allies on which hangs the hope of the race.\(^{28}\)

\(^{26}\) *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, Jan. 24, 1918, 22.
\(^{27}\) Ibid.
\(^{28}\) Minutes of the Pittsburgh Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Pittsburgh 1918, 330.
ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS!

Painting in popular magazine, c. 1918. (Original in color) Hench Scrapbook Collection, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.
At the same annual conference, Reverend W. S. Lockard, who served as Superintendent of the Pittsburgh District, reminded the delegates that, "We consider this a holy war, and the spirit of the ancient crusade pervades every church." Reverend H. H. Hill, Superintendent of the McKeensport District, placed the outcome — victory — within the context of the survival of Christian civilization. It was, in the Superintendent's opinion, a "... war of modern civilization against the mightiest effort paganism has put forth since the days of early martyrs." Church members were advised by their spiritual leaders that a German victory would sink civilization "... beneath the waves of heathenism."

The Pittsburgh Christian Advocate quickly adhered to the war theme and continued, with each week's publication, to indoctrinate the Pittsburgh Methodists on their obligations to God and country. The Advocate maintained that the church had a responsibility for making patriotism effective. "Not only from the pulpit," said the Advocate, "but also through the activities of the many branches of church organization there should go words that call our generation to the tremendous opportunity to defend and promote the cause of liberty and establish Christian democracy in the world." For those who may have doubted the necessity of going to war, the Advocate had the following advice:

But, whatever we think of war, however we dispise and hate it and protest against it, our great nation is at war; engaged in the most terrible conflict ever promoted. We did not want it, but we entered it as under the command of fate. ... not unlike the way Jesus went upon the cross.

Under the auspices of the Methodist War Council, the bishops toured the United States, attempting to arouse the patriotic spirit of Methodism. Bishop Franklin Hamilton, who, according to the Advocate, was the most sought-after of the bishops, visited Pittsburgh in mid-1918. The reason for his popularity became immediately apparent when he mounted the pulpit. In a voice described as "booming," he exhorted his audience to "... roll back the barbarians, these 'Shameless Huns' who know no law and no honor." Bishop William Frazier McDowell, speaking on the "State of the Church and Country," informed his listeners that, "We do not like hell, but we will go

29 Ibid.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 329-30.
32 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, Jan. 24, 1918, 2.
33 Ibid.
34 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, May 23, 1918, 9.
through it if we must, to destroy the forces and dethrone the persons who in greed and barbarism let hell loose in the world." 35

In the event that the bishops failed to convince the Pittsburgh Methodists of the righteousness of war, the Advocate launched a literary barrage that swept away all doubt. Week after week its readers were presented with rationalizations for a Christian war. Shortly after the entry of the United States into the war, the Advocate explained to its readers the necessity for such a step. "America's prime duty," said the Methodist paper, "is to guard the heritage of freedom and democracy with which God has entrusted us in a day when freedom and democracy are imperiled. . . ." 36 In May 1917, the Advocate observed:

Not the German people but the militaristic oligarchy which has ruined the splendid civilization of that people, is our foe. We chant no hymn of hate. We fight for the deliverance of manhood from militarism and despotism. The battle-cry of the old Crusaders — Deus vult! — 'God wills it!' — inspires us to do and dare or suffer and die. 37

Late in the spring of 1918, the Methodist Episcopal Church was still explaining its support for the war. The Pittsburgh Advocate's rationalization for Methodist participation in the European war was a classic example of the validating function which religion performed. In 1918, organized religion, in Pittsburgh and across the United States, was the institution whose credibility was above criticism and whose devoted followers disseminated the important social values and accepted behavior to the society. Like the national statesmen, who referred to their power in terms of either ethical or legal principles, the Methodist clergy used phrases such as "... standing in the breach when justice and civilization are imperiled." 38 Or, when they referenced the American political system, it was in terms of "democratic, peace-loving and freedom loving." "God wills it," became the ultimate appeal to the conscience of the world. These were not "mere" rationalizations, because they reflected a deeper motive: to defend the churches' interpretation of the American belief system against ideas which the Protestant churches recognized as threatening. In 1918, it was a real war against the same ideas that had aroused the Protestant churches to resist, or "Americanize" the foreign cultures carried to America from eastern and southern Europe.

35 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, May 18, 1918, 18.
36 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, Apr. 19, 1917, 1.
38 Ibid.
The spirit of the Methodist Church's perspective on the war was revealed in an article that appeared in the Advocate in June 1918 under the title, "Recruiting for Christ." For those individuals who did not "... join in prosecuting the war ... they should count themselves out of the nation. ..." 39 Those persons who have "... no interest in the people's business, who have 'views' or 'loyalties' or 'objections' which hinder them from enlistment ... are now regarded as unfit to be called Americans. ..." 40 The Pittsburgh Methodist Church left little doubt that it regarded the Lord's work and the war as one. "The churches," it said, "must do the war work — if they shirk it or try to save their own lives in the present crisis they will certainly lose out." 41

The Methodist leadership was particularly harsh on those individuals who, for whatever reason, chose not to support the war. The conscientious objector received no sympathy from the principal Protestant churches in 1917. In fact, ministers who preached against the war were fired or forced to resign. Reverend E. P. Ryland, Superintendent of the Los Angeles District of the Methodist Church, was forced to resign "... because he refused to join the Bishop in a series of patriotic addresses." 42 Billy Sunday, the missionary revivalist, was reported to have declared that "the Christian Pacifists ought to be treated as Frank Little was at Butte and then let the coroner do the rest." 43 So, the recommendation of a widely known, and, in some circles, admired, religious leader was to lynch objectors.

The Pittsburgh Christian Advocate devoted considerable space to the conscientious objector. The Methodist Church was determined that such a person would not be considered a hero nor would he be sheltered or defended by the church while "the people of God ... battle for civilization and peace of righteousness." 44 Individual ministers assailed the objector from the pulpit by assigning to him motives of cowardliness. Other church spokesmen questioned the conscientious objector's religion, suggesting that perhaps he was "un-Godly" and therefore, forfeited the church's respect.

The Methodist Church, which had regarded the foreign-born as a threat before the outbreak of the war, considered him to be a real danger to the nation's security in wartime. The Advocate's editorial of

39 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, June 13, 1918, 3.
40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Fite and Peterson, Opponents of War, 1917-1918, 115.
43 Ibid., 116.
44 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, Aug. 23, 1917, 2.
January 24, 1918, revealed a fundamental negative prejudice that was carried-over from the days when "Americanization through temperance" had been popular. In the words of the editorial:

This war has taught us very concretely the danger of allowing large bodies of aliens to live among us, enjoying our liberties, abuse our freedom as they often do, become prosperous under our flag, and yet remain in heart and at law bound to their native land. America will be criminally foolish ever again to allow the cultivation of alien schools, churches, newspapers and institutions on her shores as has been so guilelessly permitted heretofore.  

Some of the Methodist ministers explained the war as a purifying process. Reverend Wade Wager of the Pittsburgh Conference interjected an old American prejudice against all that was European. "A decay," he said, "of national life had set in all over Europe; Germany just beat the others to the reversion to barbarism." Interestingly, Reverend Wade reminded his congregation that the church had, with slight success, preached against "luxury, softness and selfishness"; but ". . . this war," he preached, "is doing what we could not do — stopping extravagance, softness of conduct, decay."  

For Pittsburgh Methodism, the foremost domestic concern during the war years was temperance. And, in as much as temperance and war were both under the banner of patriotism, it was natural for the church to pursue a domestic temperance campaign and link it with the war effort.

The society-oriented agencies in Methodism, although conservative and dominated by individual-salvationists, were diverted from the social issues and became caught-up in the war hysteria. The Epworth League became a vehicle for promoting military service among young men and Red Cross work among young ladies. In December 1917, the Epworth League of the Methodist Episcopal Church boasted 25,000 members in military service. The Methodist Sunday School Union devoted its resources to patriotic rallies and to propagandizing on the righteousness of American involvement in the war.

Two of the more socially concerned agencies within Methodism, the Women's Home Missionary Society and the Methodist Federation for Social Service, realigned their programs to accommodate the war effort. The Home Missionary Society decided to close its facilities in the Pittsburgh district as a fuel conservation measure, leaving its clients to seek aid elsewhere. The Federation could offer only advice.

45 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, Jan. 24, 1918, 3.
46 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, June 6, 1918, 6.
47 Ibid.
"The old order," it said, "of selfishness must be replaced by a new order of kindness, justice, brotherhood." 48 According to its statement, the "Great War" would open such a new era. While Sunday schools raised money for the war and ministers preached sermons on patriotic thrift, social issues were relegated to the lowest priority, and no one dared complain lest he be identified as a German-sympathizer or a "slacker."

All that remained was temperance.

In February 1917, the *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate* questioned the appropriateness of using grain and fruit in the production of liquor because the "... products ... minister only to sensuous indulgence and that at the expense of the efficiency of laboring men and of the comfort and happiness of their families. ..." 49 On the other hand, an "... embargo upon this waste would promote efficiency, comfort, happiness and true wealth." 50

The Reverend Charles Stelzle, chairman of a temperance campaign, informed his congregation that the trade union movement was endangered by the liquor traffic which was, in turn, being pushed by the "brewery workers, bartenders, and foreign workingmen. ..." 51 Reverend Stelzle was convinced that this force was so powerful that "they have already succeeded in controlling the A.F. of L. and they are trying to dominate every Central Labor Union in America. ..." 52

The reverend associated aliens and liquor, then condemned both. He argued that American labor, inspired by foreigners, posed a danger to the temperance movement. He reminded his audience that "this campaign is timely, because of the strong probability of war with Germany." 53 After relating the fact that every country in Europe found it necessary to restrict the output of liquor, he quoted Lloyd George as saying, "'We are fighting Germany, Austria and Drink, and as far as I can see, the greatest of the three deadly foes is Drink.'" 54

A few days after the United States declared war, the *Advocate* picked up on the theme of "Alcohol and Preparedness" and ballyhooed war and prohibition in the same articles. "Certainly," began one, "... if we are going to need gun powder let us keep it DRY and let us keep DRY the men who make it and the men who use it and the

48 *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate*, June 28, 1918, 8.
50 Ibid.
51 Ibid., 6.
53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
whole nation. . . .” 55 The church found the use of alcohol by the military to be one of the most alarming aspects of the entire temperance situation. Reverend Clarence Wilson, of the Pittsburgh Conference, believed, “Americans cannot fight this war with the brake on.” 56 He wanted to keep the “boys” from drinking by keeping them away from “wet” areas. “Unless the Federal government,” he said, “immediately asserts authority over territory contiguous to military camps and depots, we may expect scandal, shame, loss and disaster.” 57 Wilson offered little comfort as he pictured breweries exploiting the soldiers and, at the same time, forcing food prices up by purchasing grain. He called for prohibition and asked that the distilleries be used to “. . . make munition alcohol and as a source of power fuel. Use the breweries to pack meat, pack fruit, make vinegar, make ice and serve useful ends.” 58

In spite of the war hysteria, a few courageous ministers within the Methodist Church dissented. These ministers attempted to raise Christianity above the level of a folk religion and above the conflicts of nationalism. Reverend J. E. Morrison, in August 1917, argued on behalf of the conscientious objector.

Christ’s kingdom is built on moral foundations with no authority back of it other than the sanction of divine rewards and penalties at the hand of a righteous judge. . . . There is no democracy left in the nation, no Protestantism in the Church when men are forced to do what they believe Jesus Christ absolutely forbids. It is no gain to win a war if you have to make men sell their souls before they will fight. 59

Nearly one year later, Bishop William A. Quayle came to the realization that the church’s total commitment to the preaching of patriotism presented an awesome threat to the “Gospel.” He expressed his alarm in the pages of the Pittsburgh Christian Advocate.

Patriotism is a lesser majesty than the Gospel. . . . Have a care, Methodism, lest in the revel of patriotism we become unconsciously remiss in the highest patriotism, namely, the proclamation and practice of spirituality, the preaching of Jesus the Saviour. . . . 60

The objections, raised by a couple of ministers, did not alter the Methodist Episcopal Church’s avowed intent: to defeat pagan
Germany and, at the same time, destroy alcohol. In order to achieve these objectives, the Pittsburgh Methodist churches sacrificed their already limited but socially-oriented programs. Instead the church adopted total abstinence as the quintessence of the Godly commonwealth. To achieve total abstinence meant drawing support away from the church’s broader social endeavors. The church’s energy and resources were simply exhausted by the strenuous crusade to eliminate alcohol and win the war.

The Methodist Church’s devotion to winning the war worked to accelerate a decline in social awareness. Patriotism, once it was coupled with prohibition, became the dominant reforming force in Pittsburgh Methodism. The churches held rallies, preached sermons, collected money, turned off utilities, and encouraged young men to join the military, all in the name of Christianity. Perhaps the statement by Reverend Wager best expressed the church’s obsession with the war: “We must make this war a Christian measure, and make Christianity a war measure.” 61

There was no place in Pittsburgh Methodism for those individuals who objected to the war, either on moral grounds or because it diverted attention from social Christian measures — poverty, hunger, factories, and the social teachings of Jesus. The socially-oriented church leaders were dealt a severe blow by the events of the early twentieth century; and, although the struggle to create a socially-relevant church would continue in later decades, from that blow the Social Gospel was never to recover.

That the American churches, Pittsburgh Methodism in particular, so enthusiastically backed the waging of war should not be unexpected. The churches in the United States, despite claims of fidelity to the teachings of Jesus Christ, were, in fact, the essential institutional support for the policies of the nation. Two and one-half centuries earlier, the Puritans had introduced a “way of life” concept which was nothing more than the imposition of social orthodoxy on the community. Even when deleted of Puritan supervision, this notion prevailed in America. The endorsement of government policy by the American churches was a manifestation of the old Puritan “way of life” belief. The “Hun” from central Europe and the alien and alcohol from within had the effect of challenging the American belief system, i.e., “way of life.”

But the alarming characteristic of this position was not so much the endorsement of war but the extreme self-righteousness of the church’s position and the equally strong inclination to support extending, even

61 Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, May 16, 1918, 1.
by force, the American "way of life" throughout the world. This tendency has continued throughout the twentieth century, and in the more favorable environment of post-World War II, the United States would attempt to establish its economic presence, under moral auspices, throughout the world.
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